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Corps helps reduce flooding, damage throughout region

With the amount of recent rain and snow fall, the flooding in and around Pittsburgh could have been a lot worse. The US Army Corps of Engineers Pittsburgh District flood damage reduction reservoirs helped keep flooding and damages to a minimum.

The Corps of Engineers operates and maintains 16 flood damage reduction reservoirs throughout the five-state Upper Ohio River Basin.

With these reservoirs in full operation, the water levels around Pittsburgh were reduced by five to six feet.

Reservoirs typically maintain certain levels throughout the year. This year however, due to the low amount of rain throughout the summer, some reservoirs were well below their usual winter levels. This gave the reservoirs more storage capacity and the controlled release of this excess water reduces downstream flooding.

Without Corps reservoirs, the flood in January 1996 would have raised the crest at The Point in Pittsburgh by 9.7 feet and during the September 2004 flooding, the crest at The Point of 31.1 feet would have been 7.7 feet higher.

As the Headwaters District, Pittsburgh has played a key role in the evolvement of the Corps of Engineers' flood damage reduction mission. Part of that role is directly related to the region's history of major floods. Local and state efforts to find solutions to local and regional flooding prompted Congressional debate on a national flood control role. Devastation from the 1936 St. Patrick's Day Flood finally provided the impetus to pass the Omnibus Flood Control Act of 1936 assigning that mission to the Corps of Engineers.

Since then, the Pittsburgh District has constructed a system of 16 flood control reservoirs and 42 local flood protection projects that have returned more than \$20 in flood damages prevented for every \$1 invested. Regional sources estimate that the District's flood control reservoirs prevented over \$10.2 billion of damages and 42 of its local flood protection projects prevented over \$2.4 billion of damages since their construction.

These projects are also a prime example of federal and local partnerships. Local sponsors share in the costs of planning, designing, and implementing flood damage reduction projects. The District also conducts an active public involvement program to elicit comments and questions on the problem being studied and alternative solutions being considered.

Public interest and concern over other related water resource issues has led to most of the District's reservoirs being authorized for multiple purposes to include: recreation, water quality, water supply, low flow argumentation, downstream recreation, and fish and wildlife management.

For media inquiries, contact the Public Affairs Office at 412-395-7500 or email: celrp-pa@usace.army.mil.